

BATIK AS INDONESIAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY (AEC)

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ABSTRACT: *This article describes there is a significant distinction between the development of diplomacy during the 19th and 20th century, which relies on the broader function of the non-state actors. Such a phenomenon is currently known as public diplomacy, in which all state government in the world employ this as a means to improve the country's image. Public diplomacy is also considered as a soft power instrument of a country as the means of communication with the public of other countries pertaining to attitudes, institutions, cultures, national interests and policies of the country. Batik is an official cultural heritage of Indonesia declared by UNESCO as the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on October 2, 2009. Declared as the official cultural heritage of Indonesia, Indonesian government perceived this as an instrument to widespread Indonesian batik culture within global world. This is particularly in accordance with the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community considered by Indonesian government as the opportunity to introduce and improve the benefits of a state economically, through the exports of batik to ASEAN countries.*

KEYWORDS: *batik, public diplomacy, AEC, soft power*

INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy, as commonly known, is defined as a state government's effort to influence the policies and measures of other state governments (Suryokusumo, 2004: 1). In its development, diplomacy is no longer of the emphasis of *hard power*¹ context, but began to shift toward *soft power*² one. The advancement of information technology is one factor that encourages more countries to employ *soft power* in diplomacy.

One important aspect of a country's soft power is the culture, in which a country is able to take advantages of the cultural factors as the instrument of ideas and information exchanges with any other countries, in expectation of creating mutual understanding. The emergence of such a mutual understanding definitely must be supported by a positive reputation of the country (Dewangga, 2012). The use of cultural aspect as a *soft power* instrument becomes widely popular in many countries for cultural diffusion can be implemented through a peaceful way without coercion. This happens for in its practice, the actors spreading the cultural aspects of a country are not only from the country per se. However, there are non-

¹ *hard power* can be defined as the ability of a country to force its willingness on other countries through military or economic coercion (Henderson, 1998)

² *soft power* can be defined as the ability of a country to persuade other countries to carry out an action in accordance with the country's intention without any coercive powers. (Baldwin, 2002)

state actors spreading the cultural aspect of a country like the people of the country, NGO, and so forth. The role of a country's government in the context of the spread of culture is only of the aspects of policy-making in the context of regulation or budget provider (Susanto, 2008).

The contemporaneous development of diplomacy emphasizing the use of *soft power* element through culture has prompted the decline of *hard power* existence through military and economic coercion in diplomacy. This eventually leads to the strengthening of cultural aspects of a country, which encourages others to comply with the policy-making country. The most important thing is positive reputation of a country that would encourage other countries to collaborate either in the context of bilateral or multilateral. The use of *soft power* (culture) in the context of public diplomacy is in accordance with Indonesian goal to improve either bilateral or multilateral collaboration with other countries as stated by the sixth president of Indonesia, Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono, that *soft power* utilization as the achievement instrument of national interest of Indonesia is considered important due to the abundant *soft power* potency like Bali, batik, fried rice, handycraft and music, which can improve the image of Indonesia in global world (TimRedaksi, 2010).

Batik is one of the creative industries with high potential on the utilizing of *soft power* instrument of Indonesia. Batik, in general term, can be defined as a pictorial fabric whose creation was done specifically by writing on cloth and processed in certain ways (Prasetyo, 2010). The declaration of batik as the *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of Indonesia* by *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) on October 2, 2009 provides an opportunity for Indonesia to maximize profits through the introducing of batik to the international public, as suggested by the Minister for People's Welfare (United Indonesia Cabinet I), Aburizal Bakrie, that the proposal nomination of batik to UNESCO aims at the development of Indonesian batik within international markets (Ulum, 2016).

Reviewed from the data of Indonesian batik export value to foreign countries from 2010-2014, there had been a significant increase in the export of batik. As a matter of fact, the export value of Indonesian batik in 2010 was as much as 22 million USD, and then increased to 340 million USD in 2014, which means there had been an increase by 1445% in the last five years. In this regard, the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 may be perceived as an opportunity for Indonesia to maximize national benefits through the internationalization of batik committed by either government or non-government actors of Indonesia (Hidayat, 2015). In this article, the author will focus on the efforts of Indonesian Public Diplomacy in maximizing the batik potency as the *soft power* instruments of Indonesia in order to achieve national interest in the era of AEC.

METHODOLOGY

This article applies qualitative approach with primary data collection of Indonesian Public Diplomacy from the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy of Indonesia while the secondary data is obtained through books, journals, and internet.

Public Diplomacy

The advancement of information technology, global world condition and the development of actors in international relations somehow impact, either directly or indirectly, the development of diplomacy studies. Currently, diplomacy shifts from a traditional context, where states are of the monolith actors, to a modern context, where the actors of diplomacy are no longer only of states –or we recognize this as public diplomacy. There are various choices in the practice of diplomacy nowadays due to the advancement of information technology, yet war as a last resort in diplomacy could not be entirely denied. Issues carried out in public diplomacy usually ranges between environmental issues, tourism, culture, terrorism, health, to human rights.

J.B. Manheim mentioned that public diplomacy is:

“Effort by government of one nation to influence public or elite opinion in a second nation for the purpose of turning foreign policy of the target nation to advantage” (Bennet, 1994: 132).

The next definition on public diplomacy was suggested by the Directorate General of Indonesian Public Diplomacy, A.M. Fachir, who stated that public diplomacy is the empowerment of all potency of a country, which might include the potential development of natural beauty and cultural diversity introduced to international community. The potential empowerment aims to achieve one goal, which is to win hearts and mind, domestically and internationally (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013a).

In the end, it can be concluded that public diplomacy is an effort of a country to achieve its national interest through the process of *informing*, *understanding*, and *influencing* toward the public of other countries. In more details, it might be concerned that traditional diplomacy emphasizes on the relationship through government-to-government-relation mechanism. Meanwhile, public diplomacy emphasizes on the relationship of government-to-people or even people-to-people relations, which aims to provide a good image of a country within the perspective of other countries that may be invoked to achieve broader national interest (Susetyo PR, 2008).

Informing process is conducted through the use of printed or electronic media, for instance the reporting of an event-organizing through newspaper, pamphlets or the spreading of information through Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and other variants of electronic media, which basically aims to make it easier for public to access the information.

Understanding is a process that provides an explanation on a promoted information in order to be fully understood by the people receiving the information. Finally, *influencing* is the final process that describes the result of public response of other countries on every single information delivered. The common way in the process of *influencing* is by delivering or introducing the local culture of a country attempting to do *influencing*, or by assigning a representative whose job is to spread the culture in a particular country.

Influencing is the final stage among the series of processes carried out by a country. This stage consists of a description of result in the form of response of public from other countries toward the information delivered by a country of stakeholder that performs the process of *informing* and *understanding*.

These processes of *informing*, *understanding*, and *influencing* in public diplomacy would be employed by the author to elaborate the efforts of public diplomacy of Indonesian batik in Southeast Asia, particularly since the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

Diplomacy Efforts of Indonesian Batik in Southeast Asia

A. *Informing*

The introducing of batik culture to the Southeast Asian countries is conducted by both central and regional government of Indonesia as well as both observers and batik entrepreneurs (NGO). Such an effort has been carried out long before the establishment of AEC with the purpose of introducing, so the public of ASEAN members would prefer Indonesian batik when AEC is established.

Informing efforts of Indonesia was by holding an event of World Batik Summit (WBS) 2011 under the theme of “Indonesia: Global Home Batik” at Jakarta Convention Center starting from September 28-October 2, 2011. The event was organized by Ministry of Trade and several other ministries in collaboration with Indonesian Batik Foundation (Pangestu, 2011). The event, according to the founder of Batik Indonesia Foundation, Dipo Alam, is held in order to build enthusiasm on batik product internationally, especially in preparation for AEC. From the government side, the Minister of Trade at that time, Mari Elka Pangestu, revealed that batik might be developed and made anywhere, but the house should still remain in Indonesia (Pangestu, 2011).

In regard to the WBS event in Batam, the government of Batam City through the Batam Chamber of Commerce, also held an event as the continuation of WBS event in Jakarta, namely Batik Expo on December 2-4 in Mega Mall Batam Center. This event was to promote local batik in national and Southeast Asia level under the theme of Batam as Batik Promotion Center for ASEAN (“Make Batam as the Center of Batik Promotion for ASEAN”, 2011).

The promotion of batik by Batam Government was attended by the Governor of Riau Island, Minister of Industry, and Ambassadors of ASEAN Countries for Indonesia. The committee, represented by the Chairman of Batam Chamber of Commerce, Nada Soraya, stated that the batik promotion by Batam Government is conducted not only in Batam but would also be conducted in the countries of ASEAN members (“Make Batam as the Center of Batik Promotion for ASEAN”, 2011).

Indonesian Government has carried out several other *informing* activities in Southeast Asian region. These activities, according to the Author’s opinion, are undertaken in order to familiarize batik to the ASEAN public. In the subsequent discussion, the author will describe the *understanding* efforts carried out by government and non-government actors in Southeast Asian region.

B. Understanding

The efforts of *understanding* carried out by Indonesian Government in the context of batik diplomacy in Southeast Asian region are by holding workshop on making batik in several Southeast Asian countries like Singapore. Initiated by Dharma Wanita Persatuan KBRI in Singapore chaired by Mrs. Ferial Saad Hadi, the event entitled *Diplomatic Coffe Morning and Batik Workshop* was held at Indonesian Embassy for Singapore on March 19, 2015. The purpose of the event, according to Mrs. Ferial Saad Hadi is to introduce batik and its philosophy to the diplomats and public in Singapore (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2015).

Workshops on making batik was held by Indonesian Embassy for Thailand in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy Indonesia, and Siamese Community supported by Garuda Indonesia under the theme of “Batik Heritage”. The purpose of this event is to promote the diversity of Indonesian batik as well as to teach Thai public about making batik correctly through such a workshop (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2012).

The event was a workshop on how to make batik attended by approximately 50 participants comprising diplomatic corps, public officials in Thailand, women organization, Thailand Textile Association, and Dharma Wanita Persatuan in Thailand. The event was opened by cocktail party with the dishes of traditional food of Indonesia and Thailand, and continued with a fashion show by 10 Indonesia models displaying batik clothes (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2012).

In Brunei Darussalam, the workshop on making batik with natural dyes was held on August 28-29, 2013 located at the Auditorium Building of Indonesian Embassy Bandar Sri Begawan. The workshop was opened by Indonesian Ambassador for Brunei Darussalam, Handriyo Kusumo Priyo, who stated in his opening speech that through the workshop, Indonesian Embassy would like to bring Indonesian batik closer to Brunei people. The workshop was also attended by Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources of Brunei Darussalam, Dayang Hajah Normah Suria Hayati binti Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama (Dr.) Hj Awang Mohd Jamil Al-Sufri Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013d).

Such a workshop on making batik organized by Indonesian Embassy are in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sport and Brunei batik craft namely Batik Desamas. Meanwhile, the purpose of the workshops is to generate interest among younger generation of Brunei Darussalam in the making of batik with natural coloring techniques. The introducing of Indonesian batik is also conducted by Indonesian people in Brunei, who belong to the members of PERMAI BRUNEI (Association of Indonesian Community in Brunei) (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013d).

C. Influencing

As the last stage of the process of Indonesian batik diplomacy in Southeast Asian region, *influencing* plays an important role for in this stage the introducing of batik culture does not

end only in the event of exhibition or workshop, but was also attempted to become the soft power of Indonesia in Southeast Asian region.

The effect of Indonesian batik diplomacy in Southeast Asian region could be seen from the emergence of Indonesian batik culture acculturation in Southeast Asian region. There are several batik designers from Southeast Asian region as well as batik models in every country of Southeast Asia. One of the example is Desamas Batik in Brunei Darussalam, which is inspired from the batik of Indonesia (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013d).

Other result from the diplomacy of Indonesian batik is the regular display of Indonesian batik products in Can Tho Trade Fair in the City of Can Tho, South Vietnam since 2013. This appears to be the success for Indonesia to enter domestic market in Vietnam (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013c).

Influencing process to the designers of Southeast Asian countries has been successfully achieved in the diplomacy of Indonesian batik. One of them is a designer from Thailand, Thawit Tangtien, who is deeply into the style of Indonesian batik that combines the sense of nationalism and fashion. Therefore, he would try to create batik fashion model based on his style in the near future (Kompas, 2011b).

The Advantage for Indonesia through Batik Diplomacy in Southeast Asia

A. Improving Indonesian Image as a Batik Manufacturer Country in Southeast Asia

The Diplomacy of Indonesian Batik conducted prior to the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community gives a positive impact on the image of Indonesian batik among ASEAN member countries. One example is the promotion of Indonesian culture during “UNIS Spring Fair 2013” Bazaar for celebrating the 25th anniversary of United Nation International School (UNIS) in Vietnam. In the event, Indonesian Embassy provided Indonesian traditional food as the dishes and displayed several Indonesian batik clothes, which apparently attracted many visitors to come to the bazaar. It turns out that the response of Hanoi people is very positive toward Indonesian traditional food and culture (Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia, 2013b).

Batik as an original piece of work from Indonesia becomes the reflection of Indonesian self-identity as a creative, open-minded, and appreciative nation. Such an image somehow affects the perception of Southeast Asian countries toward Indonesia as the largest country in Southeast Asia with the diversity of culture as the main attraction. The image of Indonesian batik has increased since the use of Indonesian batik dress-code in several ASEAN events such as the 19th ASEAN Summit in Nusa Dua, Bali. All presidents attending the Summit wore batik at that time, and even so did the president of United States, Barack Obama. Such a phenomenon somehow becomes the success for the image of Indonesia due to the admission of Indonesian as the original producer of batik in Southeast Asia (Kompas, 2011a).

In general, the introducing of batik culture has given a positive impact on Indonesian image as a batik-producer country in Southeast Asia. The knowledge of people in Southeast Asia

about batik would gradually make them understand that Indonesia is a country with diverse races, religions, and cultures. Also through batik they would understand that Indonesia is a potential country to be involved in a collaboration in several fields.

B. Economic Profits

Since the declaration of Batik as the *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO on October 2, 2009, Indonesia had gained significant profits from the export of batik. Period of 2010-2014 was regarded as the most significant increase of Indonesian batik export. The table below reveals the data for Indonesian batik export value from 2010 to 2014:

Tabel 1. Perkembangan Ekspor Industri Batik Nasional Tahun 2010-2014

Tahun	Nilai Ekspor	Pertumbuhan (%)
2010	22 Juta USD	
2011	58, 8 Juta USD	62,58 %
2012	278 Juta USD	78,84%
2013	320 juta USD	13,12%
2014	340 Juta USD	5,88%

Source: compiled from various sources

Based on the table above, it shows that the export of Indonesian batik from 2010 to 2014 had increased significantly. In 2010, the export value was 22 million USD whereas in 2014 the export value was 340 million USD. In other words, in the last five years the export value of Indonesian batik had increased by 1445% (Hidayat, 2015). Based on the data above, it can be assumed that the export value of Indonesian batik would be higher in the future. This is because the 1445% increase took place before the establishment of AEC. The author assumes that the value would be significantly higher in the future.

The optimism that Indonesian batik would become the “king” in AEC era is confirmed by Thomas Lembong, former Minister of Trade in the era of President Jokowi, who since July 2016 has served as the Head of Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM). He mentioned that batik would be a great asset for Indonesia during AEC due to the trend shifting where unique products, including batik, would be the main target (Afriyadi, 2015). Thomas Lembong mentioned that the current international market shows the tendencies of limited and exclusive product purchasing. In this regard, batik has the potency to become the most wanted product due to its uniqueness and limited manufacturing (Afriyadi, 2015).

Data from the Ministry of Industry also shows there is an increase in the export of batik before and after the establishment of AEC, such as the increasing number of business units by 14.7% (41,623 to 47,755 units) during 2011-2015. There is also an increase in the number of work force that grows 14.7% (173,829 to 199,444 people) during 2011-2015 (Pujiastuti, 2015).

The same thing happened to the value of raw material purchases, which had increased 12.8% (Rp 4.137 trillion to Rp 4.746 trillion) from 2011 to 2015. The added value of batik had also increased by 14.7% (Rp 1.909 trillion to Rp 2.191 trillion) from 2011 to 2015. The increasing number of batik enthusiasts from other countries is also reflected by the increasing export value by 14.7% (Rp 43.96 trillion to Rp 50.44 trillion) from 2011 to 2015 (Pujiastuti, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Related to the discussion above, the author concludes that since the declaration of Batik as the *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* by UNESCO, Indonesia had sought to attempt diplomacy efforts on batik. Moreover, by the establishment of AEC, Indonesian government considers batik as a great asset to achieve their national interest.

The diplomacy effort of Indonesian Batik is known as public diplomacy, in which Indonesian government carried out several efforts in promoting batik as the *soft power* instrument in Southeast Asia. Such a public diplomacy effort of Indonesia was carried out in three stages namely *informing*, *understanding*, and *influencing*. From such efforts, Indonesia had gained both material and immaterial advantages. The immaterial advantage is by the image shaping of Indonesia as a batik-producer country in Southeast Asia while the material advantage is by the increase of batik export value to Southeast Asian countries.

Finally, the focus of public diplomacy discussion in this paper relies on the role of a country in public diplomacy through the process of *informing*, *understanding*, and *influencing*. The author in this case acknowledges there are several inadequacies, and there should be other efforts of Indonesian government in order to achieve a more optimal outcome in the diplomacy of batik.

For further studies, the author suggests a more focus discussion on the public diplomacy efforts, particularly for batik, carried out by the non-state actors such as entrepreneurs, batik maker, and so forth, in order to gain a new perspective on the study of batik diplomacy.

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